



Reading by Numbers
Recalibrating the Literary Field
Katherine Bode

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Description

An exploration of the critical potential of digital humanities and quantitative methods to produce new knowledge about literary and cultural history.

'Bode doesn't pull her punches. What this book shows is that, given sufficiently extensive and longitudinal publication data, existing assumptions and generalisations about the trends of recent and historical literary publishing can be challenged in ways no longer dependent on anecdote and impression. This brings freshness to existing debates concerning historical literary publishing, both directly for Australian literature and implicitly for all others.' —*Professor Paul Eggert, Australian Defence Force Academy*

'*Reading by Numbers* challenges current practices and theories by drawing on current work in digital humanities and book history to explore a remarkably cohesive digital literary collection. Dr Bode brilliantly demonstrates the power yet contingency and partiality of known methods and theories.' —*Professor Willard McCarty, King's College London*

'It is not often – or often enough – that one is confronted by a work that has the power to transform a field of study, but this is precisely what Katherine Bode has achieved in her new history of the Australian novel. "Reading by Numbers" is as exciting as it is unsettling and it offers a major intervention in Australian literary history, not least in its power to challenge both sedimented accounts of that history and the methods used to produce them.' —*Maryanne Dever, Australian Literary Studies*

Reading by Numbers: Recalibrating the Literary Field proposes and demonstrates a new digital approach to literary history. Drawing on bibliographical information on the Australian novel in the *AustLit* database, the book addresses debates and issues in literary studies through a method that combines book history's pragmatic approach to literary data with the digital humanities' idea of computer modelling as an experimental and iterative practice. As well as showcasing this method, the case studies in ***Reading by Numbers*** provide a revised history of the Australian novel, focusing on the nineteenth century and the decades since the end of the Second World War, and engaging with a range of themes including literary and cultural value, authorship, gender, genre and the transnational circulation of fiction. The book's findings challenge established arguments in Australian literary studies, book history, feminism and gender studies, while presenting innovative ways of understanding literature, publishing, authorship and reading, and the relationships between them. More broadly, by demonstrating critical ways in which the growing number of digital archives in the humanities can be mined, modelled and visualised, ***Reading by Numbers*** offers new directions and scope for digital humanities research.

Readership: This book will benefit academics in literary, cultural and print culture studies, book history, digital humanities, feminism and gender studies.

Contents

Acknowledgements; List of Tables and Figures; Introduction: A New History of the Australian Novel; Chapter 1. Literary Studies in the Digital Age; Chapter 2. Beyond the Book: Publishing in the Nineteenth Century; Chapter 3. Nostalgia and the Novel: Looking Back, Looking Forward; Chapter 4. Recovering Gender: Rethinking the Nineteenth Century; Chapter 5. The 'Rise' of the Woman Novelist: Popular and Literary Trends; Conclusion: Literary Studies in the Digital Future; Notes; Bibliography; Index

About the Author

Katherine Bode is Head of the Digital Humanities Hub at the Australian National University, Canberra, Australia.

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